

**Summer Reading List**  
**Connecticut Conference Fall Meeting Preparations**

**FICTION**

**In The Fall** by Jeffrey Lent

In the twilight of the Civil War, Leah, an escaped slave, discovers Norman Pelham, a wounded soldier who lies dying in a battlefield outside Richmond. After she nurses him back to health, Norman brings her to his family farm in Vermont as his wife, and they begin a family. Now the mother of three, and however begrudgingly, accepted in the community, Leah travels back to the South of her birth and returns with a secret that threatens to destroy what she and Norman had created.

**George Washington Gomez: A Mexicotexan Novel** by Americo Paredes

This first novel written in the 1930s by the dean of Mexican-American folklore charts the coming of age of a young Mexican American on the Texas-Mexico border, set against the background of guerrilla warfare, banditry, land grabs, abuses by the Texas Rangers and the overpowering pressures to disappear into the American melting pot.

**The Space Between Us** by Thrity Umrigar

Poignant and compelling, evocative and unforgettable, *The Space Between Us* is an intimate portrait of a distant yet familiar world. Set in modern-day India and witnessed through two compelling and achingly real women, the novel shows how the lives of the rich and the poor are intrinsically connected yet vastly removed from each other, and vividly captures how the bonds of womanhood are pitted against the divisions of class and culture.

**Sag Harbor** by Colson Whitehead

The year is 1985. Benji Cooper is one of the only black students at an elite prep school in Manhattan. He spends his falls and winters going to roller-disco bar mitzvahs, playing too much Dungeons and Dragons, and trying to catch glimpses of nudity on late-night cable TV. But every summer, Benji escapes to the Hamptons, to Sag Harbor, where a small community of African American professionals have built a world of their own. In this deeply affectionate and fiercely funny coming-of-age novel, Whitehead—using the perpetual mortification of teenage existence and the desperate quest for reinvention—lithely probes the elusive nature of identity, both personal and communal.

**Almost a Woman** by Esmeralda Santiago

In her new memoir, the acclaimed author of *When I Was Puerto Rican* continues the riveting chronicle of her emergence from the barrios of Brooklyn to the theaters of Manhattan. “Negi,” as Santiago’s family affectionately calls her, leaves rural Macún in 1961 to live in a three-room tenement apartment with seven young siblings, an inquisitive grandmother, and a strict mother who won’t allow her to date. At thirteen, Negi yearns for her own bed, privacy, and a life with her father, who remains in Puerto Rico. Translating for Mami at the welfare office in the morning, starring as Cleopatra at New York’s prestigious Performing Arts High School in the afternoons, and dancing salsa all night, she yearns to find balance between being American and being Puerto Rican. When Negi defies her mother by going on a series of hilarious dates, she finds that independence brings its own set of challenges.

**Love Medicine**      *by Louise Erdrich*

Louise Erdrich's foremost subject throughout her writing career has been the Native American culture—primarily that of the Chippewa—of the northern Midwest. Born in Minnesota in 1954, Erdrich was raised in North Dakota, where her parents taught at a Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school; Erdrich later attended Dartmouth College and Johns Hopkins University. *Love Medicine* (1984), her first novel, was also the first novel in the Native American tetralogy that includes *The Beet Queen* (1986), *Tracks* (1988), and *The Bingo Palace* (1994). These four novels trace the saga of two extended families on a North Dakota Chippewa reservation, exploring the impact of intense poverty, insensitive government policies, alcoholism, and the Catholic Church on a culture that nonetheless survives.

**The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao**      *by Junot Díaz*

Winner of the 2008 National Book Critics Circle Award and the 2008 Pulitzer Prize, for Fiction: The long-awaited-and thrillingly satisfying, genuinely original-first novel from the unmistakable voice behind the story collection *Drown*. Dominican-American writer Junot Díaz has spun the heartbreak and loneliness of the immigrant experience into literary gold with memorable stories of marginalized outsiders caught between two cultures.

**NON-FICTION**

**Between Barack and a Hard Place: Racism and White Denial in the Age of Obama**      *by Tim Wise*

In this timely new book, Tim Wise explores how Barack Obama's emergence as a political force is taking the race debate to new levels. According to Wise, for many white people, Obama's rise signifies the end of racism as a pervasive social force; they point to Obama not only as a validation of the American ideology that anyone can make it if they work hard, but also as an example of how institutional barriers against people of color have all but vanished. But is this true? And does a reinforced white belief in color-blind meritocracy potentially make it harder to address ongoing institutional racism? After all, in housing, employment, the justice system, and education, the evidence is clear: white privilege and discrimination against people of color are still operative and actively thwarting opportunities, despite the success of individuals like Obama.

**The Children in Room E4: American Education on Trial**      *by Susan Eaton*

With our nation's urban schools growing more segregated every year, Susan Eaton set out to see whether separate can ever really be equal. An award-winning journalist, Eaton spent four years at Simpson-Waverly Elementary School, an all-minority school in Hartford, Connecticut. Located in the poorest city in the wealthiest state in the nation, it is a glaring example of the great racial and economic divide found in almost every major urban center across the country.

**Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery**      *by Anne Farrow, Joel Lang, Jenifer Frank*

Slavery in the South has been documented in volumes ranging from exhaustive histories to bestselling novels. But the North's profit from—indeed, dependence on—slavery has mostly been a shameful and well-kept secret... until now. In this startling and superbly researched new book, three veteran New England journalists demythologize the region of America known for tolerance and liberation, revealing a place where thousands of people were held in bondage and slavery was both an economic dynamo and a necessary way of life.

**Life on the Color Line: The True Story of a White Boy Who Discovered He Was Black** by Gregory Howard Williams

When the author and his brother were forced to leave Virginia and return to his father's family in Muncie, Indiana, they discovered that their father was a black man who has "passed" in white society. *Life on the Color Line* tells Williams' story, revealing how his courage and perseverance helped him overcome years of poverty, racism, and intolerance.

**VIDEOS - FEATURE LENGTH MOVIES**

**Secret Life of Bees**

Fourteen-year-old Lily Owens lost her beloved mother when she was only four—under tragic circumstances clouded by time and secrecy. She later found a fiercely protective "stand-in," her abusive father's outspoken housekeeper, Rosaleen. Ignoring differences in age and color—and the fact that racial hatred seethed during the summer of 1964 in rural South Carolina—these two unlikely companions set off on a seemingly aimless pilgrimage that ends at the home of a trio of eccentric bee-keeping black sisters.

**The Great Debaters**

This is the story of temperamental debate coach who molded the students of a small East Texas college into a formidable team that gave even Harvard's elite squad a run for their money.

**Glory Road**

Based on a true story this film recounts the tale of the all-black Texas Western Miners, who defeated the all-white Kentucky Wildcats (and legendary "coach of the century" Adolph Rupp) for the 1966 NCAA Championship, a momentous upset that, indeed, significantly changed the racial landscape of college basketball.

**VIDEOS - DOCUMENTARIES**

**Traces of the Trade**

In **Traces of the Trade**, Producer/Director Katrina Browne tells the story of her forefathers, the largest slave-trading family in U.S. history. Given the myth that the South is solely responsible for slavery, viewers will be surprised to learn that Browne's ancestors were Northerners. The film follows Browne and nine fellow family members on a remarkable journey which brings them face-to-face with the history and legacy of New England's hidden enterprise.